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Angle- and Spectral-Dependent Light Scattering  
from Plasmonic Nanocups

by

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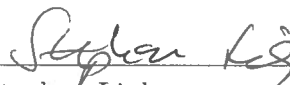
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## Abstract

# Angle- and Spectral-Dependent Light Scattering from Plasmonic Nanocups

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The interaction of light with small designed particles and structures gives rise to an increasing number of phenomena of potentially dramatic technological importance, such as metamaterials, superlens focusing, and enhanced spectroscopy. Metallic nanostructures with their geometry-dependent optical resonances are a topic of intense current interest due to their ability to manipulate light in ways not possible with conventional optical materials. A particularly fascinating aspect of these systems is the recently realized possibility of creating optical frequency “magnetic plasmon” responses of comparable magnitude to the “electric plasmon” response. Au nanocups at their magnetoinductive resonance have the unique ability to redirect scattered light in a direction dependent on cup orientation, as a true three-dimensional nanoantenna.

As optical frequency nanoantennas, reduced-symmetry plasmonic nanoparticles have light-scattering properties that depend strongly on geometry, orientation, and variations in dielectric environment. Here we investigate how these factors influence the spectral and angular dependence of light scattered by Au nanocups. A simple

dielectric substrate causes the axial, electric dipole mode of the nanocup to deviate substantially from its characteristic  $\cos^2\theta$  free space scattering profile, while the transverse, magnetic dipole mode remains remarkably insensitive to the presence of the substrate. Nanoscale irregularities of the nanocup rim and the local substrate permittivity have a surprisingly large effect on the spectral- and angle-dependent light-scattering properties of these structures. The different angular scattering and wavelength response from the axial and transverse nanocup modes make the nanocup an interesting particle for the nanoscale manipulation of light in three dimensions. The sensitivity of this system to geometric and environmental factors may present opportunities for active, substrate-mediated control of light scattering.

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# Contents

Abstract	ii
Acknowledgments	iv
List of Illustrations	vii
<b>1 Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2 Angle- and Spectral-Dependent Light Scattering from Plasmonic Nanocups</b>	<b>3</b>
2.1 Introduction . . . . .	3
2.2 Brief background of nanocups . . . . .	5
2.3 Results and Discussions . . . . .	6
2.3.1 Nanoparticle Scattering Profiles . . . . .	6
2.3.2 Effects of Nanocup Geometry . . . . .	12
2.3.3 Effects of Substrate Permittivity . . . . .	14
2.4 Finite Element Method (FEM) Modeling. . . . .	19
2.5 Summaries and conclusions . . . . .	23
<b>3 Fabrication of Nanocups</b>	<b>25</b>
3.1 Introduction . . . . .	25
3.2 Sample Fabrication . . . . .	25
3.3 Summaries and conclusions . . . . .	29
<b>4 Conclusion</b>	<b>30</b>

# Illustrations

2.1	Extinction measurements of nanoshells and nanocups on a glass substrate. . . . .	8
2.2	Angular dependence of far-field scattering from nanoshell and nanocup plasmon modes on glass substrates. . . . .	10
2.3	Effect of nanocup geometry on plasmon mode energies. . . . .	13
2.4	Effects of a pristine silicon substrate on the plasmon spectrum and angular light scattering of a nanocup. . . . .	15
2.5	Energy of the plasmon resonances in a symmetric silver heptamer Effects of a realistic silicon substrate on the plasmon spectrum and angular light scattering of a nanocup. . . . .	18
2.6	Detailed geometry of wavering rim on experimental and simulated nanocups. . . . .	21
2.7	Simulated scattered electric field magnitude around a nanocup and nanoshell. . . . .	22
2.8	Charge distribution on nanocup excited at 700 nm. In the region of spectral overlap, both the axial and transverse modes are excited by the same wavelength at different phases. . . . .	23
3.1	Fabrication of nanoparticle samples. . . . .	27
3.2	Schematic of the backscattering detection system. . . . .	28

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

With Finite Element Method (FEM) and Finite-Difference Time-Domain (FDTD) method, we theoretically investigated the optical properties of nanocup, which possess magnetoinductive modes that redirect scattered light in a direction dependent on particle orientation, an effect that also controls the interparticle coupling of plasmons in adjacent nanocups.

Metallic half-shell “nanocups” can be considered to be three-dimensional optical frequency analogues of split ring resonators (SRR). Their three-dimensional structure removes the geometrical restrictions of planar SRRs fabricated by current methods. Suspensions of randomly oriented nanocups and close-packed arrays of strongly interacting nanocups and nanovoids do not facilitate observation of their unique light scattering properties. Here we report the fabrication and optical properties of oriented nanocups. Each nanostructure supports a special transverse plasmon mode with an asymmetric resonant electron current that controls the direction of scattered light, departing from the path of the incident wave. The resonant electron current couples to a radiating electric dipole parallel to the cup opening, emitting the scattered wave in the direction of the nanocup axis.

While previous studies associate light-bending behavior with the transverse plasmon mode of the nanocup, here we observe that, in the presence of a substrate, the



axial plasmon mode can also possess light-refractive properties. The sensitivity of the angular scattering profile to nanometer-scale geometric irregularities of the nanocup rim, characteristic of the reactive ion etching process applied to nanoshells, is also observed. We also find that small changes in the dielectric permittivity of the substrate local to the nanoparticle can result in sizable effects on its light-scattering properties. Simulations of the nanoparticle substrate system using the finite element method allow us to deduce the physical origin of both spectral and angular shifts in the light-scattering properties observed in experiments.

The thesis will be organized as follows: In Chapter 2, we will briefly introduce the background knowledge of the unique properties discovered in nanocup. Then we use the FEM method to numerically calculate the optical properties of the light-bending plasmonic nanocup. We also observe effects of geometry and dielectric environment on the light scattering of plasmonic particles. The different scattering and wavelength response from both nanocup modes make nanocup an interesting particle for the nanoscale manipulation of light in three dimensions, such as enhancing the efficiency of solar cells. In Chapter 3, we need to go through the fabrication and measurements in experiments, since they are very important as well. Finally, the conclusions of the thesis are in Chapter 4.

## Chapter 2

# Angle- and Spectral-Dependent Light Scattering from Plasmonic Nanocups

### 2.1 Introduction

Plasmons, the collective electronic oscillations of metallic nanoparticles and nanostructures, are at the forefront of the development of nanoscale optics. The sensitivity of the properties of plasmonic nanoparticles to geometry, dielectric environment, and light polarization permits many degrees of freedom in the design of plasmonic structures for specific phenomena or applications. Excitation of the surface plasmons of metallic and metallodielectric nanoparticles generates intense, localized electromagnetic fields that enable processes such as surface enhanced chemical spectroscopies.[10, 13, 21] Controlling the precise geometry and composition of individual[25, 29, 39] or collective arrangements[14, 31] of plasmonic nanoparticles easily tunes the excitation energy of these oscillations through the visible and near-infrared regions of the electromagnetic spectrum for various applications. Plasmonic nanostructures can also serve to couple optical signals to planar devices, enhancing the performance of light emitting diodes,[28] photodetectors,[6, 38] and solar cells.[2, 5] Learning how to design plasmonic structures for these applications requires a comprehensive understanding of how this class of nanostructures alter the light-scattering properties of planar substrates, and, conversely, how planar substrates, as symmetry-breaking elements, alter

the optical response of plasmonic nanostructures.[3, 8, 9, 15, 27, 30, 33]

Reduced-symmetry 3D nanostructures such as nanocups (also known as semishells), possessing both electric and magnetic plasmon modes, are important model systems for the study of the light scattering properties of nanoparticles on planar substrates. Nanocups consist of a hemispherical shell of metal fabricated around a dielectric nanoparticle core, and have been of increasing interest in recent studies of plasmonic nanostructures due to their unusual and unique light-scattering properties. [11, 23, 37, 36] Nanocups possess both an electric, axial plasmon mode and a magnetic, transverse plasmon mode at two distinct and easily discernable resonant frequencies.[11] These two plasmon modes have been shown to possess distinct and very different light-scattering characteristics.[23] The axial mode scatters light with the  $\cos^2\theta$  angular dependence of a dipole scattering source, while the transverse plasmon mode exhibits a unique light-bending property where incident light from a broad cone of input angles is scattered in a direction normal to the cup rim. [7, 12, 19, 23, 40] This new degree of freedom, not available in symmetric nanoparticles, is of particular interest for the coupling of light from free space into planar or other reduced-dimensionality structures.

We directly examine the angle-dependent light-scattering properties of nanocups on a planar substrate. To compare the light-scattering properties of these structures directly with those of the equivalent, fully spherical core shell nanoparticles on the same type of substrate, we fabricate our nanocup structures directly from chemically

synthesized nanoshells. The scattering from a submonolayer of oriented nanocups demonstrates the ability of these structures to scatter light preferentially out of the incident beam path. While previous studies associate light-bending behavior with the transverse plasmon mode of the nanocup, [23] here we observe that, in the presence of a substrate, the axial plasmon mode can also possess light-refractive properties. The sensitivity of the angular scattering profile to nanometer-scale geometric irregularities of the nanocup rim, characteristic of the reactive ion etching process applied to nanoshells, is also observed. We also find that small changes in the dielectric permittivity of the substrate local to the nanoparticle can result in sizable effects on its light-scattering properties. Simulations of the nanoparticle substrate system using the finite element method (FEM) allow us to deduce the physical origin of both spectral and angular shifts in the light-scattering properties observed in experiments.

## 2.2 Brief background of nanocups

Nickolay et.al discovered the unique property of the nanocups. Metallic half-shell “nanocups” can be considered to be three-dimensional optical frequency analogues of SRRs. Their three-dimensional structure removes the geometrical restrictions of planar SRRs fabricated by current methods. Suspensions of randomly oriented nanocups[23] and closepacked arrays of strongly interacting nanocups and nanovoids[24] do not facilitate observation of their unique light scattering properties. Here we report the fabrication and optical properties of oriented nanocups. Each nanostructure sup-

ports a special transverse plasmon mode with an asymmetric resonant electron current that controls the direction of scattered light, departing from the path of the incident wave. The resonant electron current couples to a radiating electric dipole parallel to the cup opening, emitting the scattered wave in the direction of the nanocup axis. In measurements people observed both individual and coupled nanocup responses, where the latter results directly from the unique orientation-specific light-directing properties of these nanostructures.

## 2.3 Results and Discussions

### 2.3.1 Nanoparticle Scattering Profiles

Analysis of the nanoparticle optical properties was performed using a commercial finite element method software package (COMSOLMultiphysics 4.2, RF Module). A nanoshell was modeled as two concentric spheres of radii  $[r_1, r_2] = [60, 78]$  nm, consistent with the dimensions of the nanoshells used in the experiments. Nanocups with a smooth rim were modeled by removing the upper half of the gold shell layer and leaving the silica core intact. The bottom of each particle was modeled with a 3 nm facet, to allow for appropriate meshing of the numerical simulation and placed in direct contact with a semi-infinite substrate. Scattering spectra were obtained by using the StrattonChu formula to calculate the far-field from a well-defined near-field boundary and then integrating over the cross section accessible to the collection assembly at each position on the rotating stage.

Extinction measurements of nanocups and nanoshells allow us to directly compare the plasmonic properties of the etched nanocups with the spherically symmetric nanoshells from which they were obtained (Fig. 2.1). Here the nanoshells were deposited on transparent glass substrates to facilitate the optical extinction measurements. The samples were placed at an angle of  $45^\circ$  with respect to the incident light, and P-polarized incident light was used, to correspond to our light scattering measurements. The nanoshell has one principal dipolar plasmon mode (Fig. 2.1a). [25, 26, 34] Three-fold degeneracy, as illustrated by charge distributions, due to the symmetry of the nanoparticle, allows this dipole mode to be excited by both S- and P-polarized incident light (Fig. 2.1a inset). As expected, the orientation of the electric dipole moment of the plasmon mode is solely controlled by the incident direction and polarization of light. Under P-polarized light, the degeneracy has been shown to be partially lifted, where the energy of one mode is red-shifted by the presence of the dielectric substrate.[17, 35]

In contrast, the reduced symmetry of the etched nanocup creates two types of orthogonal dipole plasmons with respect to the single axis of symmetry (Fig. 2.1b). The higher-energy, axial mode is centered at nominally 650 nm for the specific dimensions used in these experiments, and is characterized by charges oscillating along the axis of symmetry, from the rim to the bottom of the semishell. The two lower-energy, degenerate transverse modes are categorized as magnetic plasmon modes because charges oscillate from one side of the rim to the opposite side following the curvature

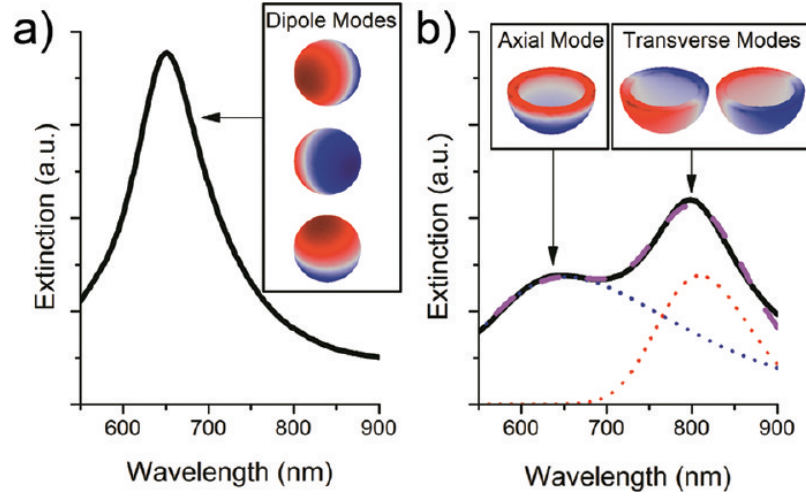


Figure 2.1 : Extinction measurements of nanoshells and nanocups on a glass substrate, oriented at  $45^\circ$ . P-polarized light excites the principal  $l = 1$  dipole plasmon modes for (a) nanoshells and (b) nanocups. A two-peak Gaussian fit isolates the contribution of the axial mode (blue) and transverse mode (red) of the nanocup extinction spectrum of nanocups. Insets show simulated charge distributions obtained using FEM modeling, showing the qualitative orientation of the electric dipole for each plasmon mode in a homogeneous environment.

of the metal.[11] Because the nanocup is an asymmetric particle, there is no axis of symmetry in the net electron motion and the net result is an optical frequency magnetic resonance. For the dimensions used here, the wavelength of these transverse modes varied between 800 and 850 nm between samples, due to the sensitivity to the etching process during fabrication. For this nanocup orientation, the axial mode is perpendicular to the substrate surface, while the two transverse modes are parallel to the substrate surface. An incident angle of  $45^\circ$  with respect to the surface normal was chosen to simultaneously excite both the axial and transverse modes of the nanocup: S-polarized light excites only one transverse mode, while P-polarized light excites both the axial and the other transverse mode. This geometry allows us to study the

angular and spectral dependence of light scattered from both modes of the nanocup without varying the incident illumination angle.

Our angle- and wavelength-dependent measurements of nanoshells and nanocups on a glass substrate are shown in Figure 2.2. For a dipole nanoantenna in a homogeneous medium ( $\varepsilon_{\text{substrate}} = 1$ ), with S-polarized incident light, this collection assembly would measure a uniform intensity at all angles, due to the cylindrical symmetry of the dipole radiation pattern. P-polarized incident light would yield the expected  $\cos^2\theta$  intensity pattern, with maximum intensity along the axis of the incident light. The presence of a substrate ( $\varepsilon_{\text{substrate}} > 1$ ) in the system imposes boundary conditions on the electromagnetic field at the interface. These conditions create a dark zone in the angular region close to the substrate where light cannot radiate into the far field, but instead refracts into the supporting substrate. [1, 20, 18] This property is observed for nanoshells on a glass ( $\varepsilon_{\text{substrate}} = 2.5$ ) substrate for S-polarized incident light (Figure 2.2a). For P-polarized light incident on the same substrate-supported nanoshell sample, a dipolar scattering pattern is observed in the backscattered light (Figure 2.2b).

In contrast to symmetric nanoparticles, the reduced symmetry of the nanocup “locks” the orientation of the oscillating electric dipole with respect to the nanocup axis of symmetry. Incident light at  $45^\circ$  excites a combination of the two transverse modes or the single axial mode, allowing us to observe the angle-dependent light scattering from all plasmon modes of the nanoparticle, for different polarizations



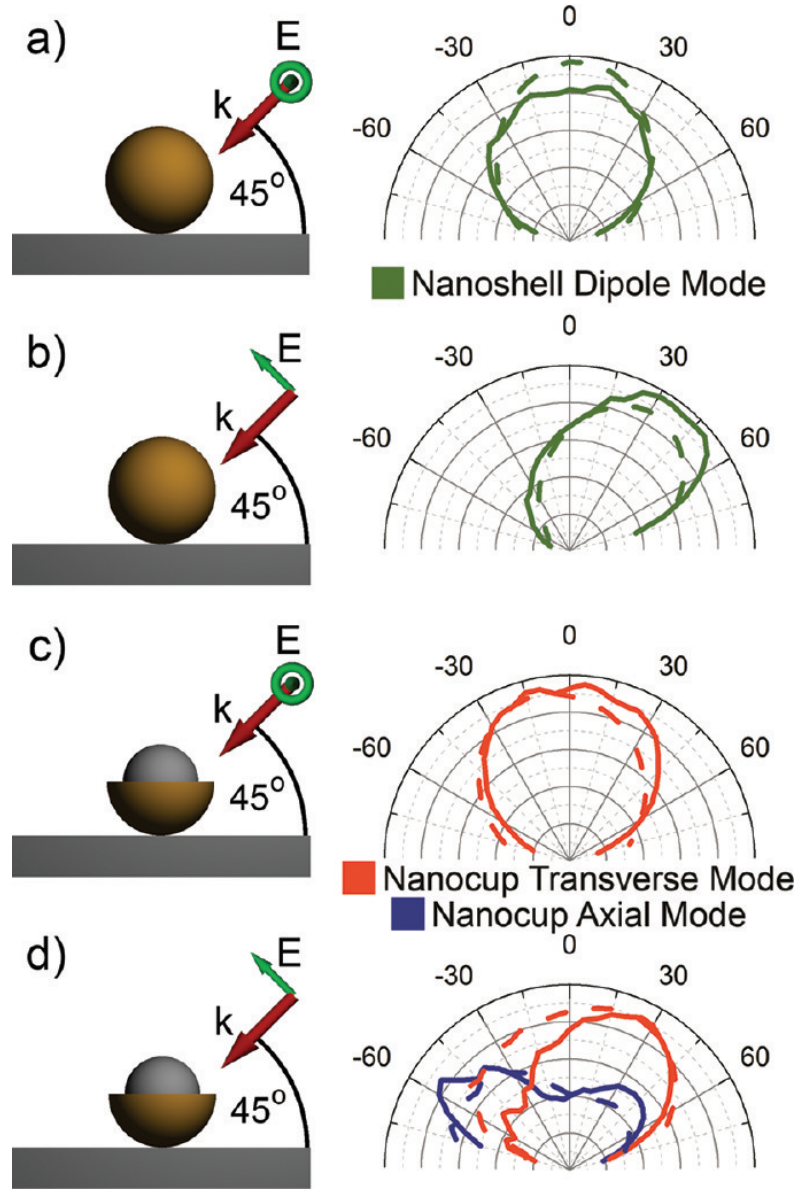


Figure 2.2 : Angular dependence of far-field scattering from nanoshell and nanocup plasmon modes on glass substrates. The amplitude of the Gaussian distribution for each mode is plotted as a function of detector position with respect to the surface normal ( $0^\circ$ ). Experimental (solid) and theoretical (dashed) data are plotted for the case of light incident at  $+45^\circ$  with S- or P-polarization indicated by the inset schematics. (a) Scattering of S-polarized light by a nanoshell ( $\lambda = 650$  nm). (b) Scattering of P-polarized by a nanoshell ( $\lambda = 650$  nm). (c) Scattering of S-polarized light by an upright nanocup ( $\lambda = 850$  nm). (d) P-polarized light incident on a nanocup excites both the transverse ( $\lambda = 850$  nm) and the axial ( $\lambda = 675$  nm) plasmon modes.

of the incident light. For S-polarized incident light, the electric field couples to the transverse nanocup mode oriented perpendicular to the reflection plane (Figure 2.2c). The measured intensity of the transverse mode, centered at 825 nm, is maximal at  $0^\circ$  with respect to the surface normal and falls to zero as the detector approaches the plane of the substrate. The majority of scattered light is radiated away from the substrate or refracted into the substrate at an angle  $\theta < \theta_c$ , the critical angle for total internal reflection (TIR). A portion of the total energy radiated above, but also along, the interface couples into the substrate, as evident by the observation of the same dark zone discussed above.

For P-polarized incident light, a component of the incident field excites the transverse mode parallel to both the reflectance plane and the substrate surface. Simulations predict that this should result in light scattering normal to the substrate. However, in this case of the nanocups used here, the experimental scattering profile is slightly asymmetric but remains within the predicted envelope. The remaining component of the electric field, oriented normal to the surface, excites the axial nanocup mode. For this mode, the oscillating dipole is now oriented normal to the substrate and produces the expected dipole scattering pattern along the plane of the interface (Figure 2.2d). It is critical to note that this scattering is due to the nanocup geometry and not coupling to a high-dielectric substrate,[8, 9] as the dielectric constant of glass ( $\epsilon_{glass} = 2.5$ ) produces a weak image charge.

### 2.3.2 Effects of Nanocup Geometry

Examining the spectral dependence in addition to the angular dependence of scattered light from nanocups reveals more aspects of their mode-dependent far-field properties. Two-dimensional maps of both the wavelength (y-axis) and angle (x-axis) dependence of the scattered light from nanocups are shown in Figure 2.3. Experimental measurements of our samples yielded a two-dimensional map with both spectrally and angularly distinct scattering from the axial and transverse modes (Figure 2.3a). Theoretical simulations of this spectral and angular dependence show that in our experimental system, a red shift is preferentially observed for the transverse plasmon modes (Figure 2.3b). Such a red shift of the transverse mode cannot be caused by the interaction with the substrate because the axial mode is expected to exhibit a much larger substrate-induced red shift than the transverse mode.[17, 35] To further investigate this red shift, we now examine how the detailed geometry of the nanocup rim influences its scattering properties.

Here we observe that the precise nanoscale geometry of the nanocup plays a significant role in determining the resonant wavelength of each plasmon mode. To more accurately simulate the experimental morphology of the etched nanocups, an oscillatory rim with the same thickness as the original gold layer was superimposed on the simple nanocup. The addition of this wavering edge geometry allows the collective oscillation of electrons in the transverse plasmon to produce higher charge densities in the sharp features of the new rim (Figure 2.3c). This increases the polarizability

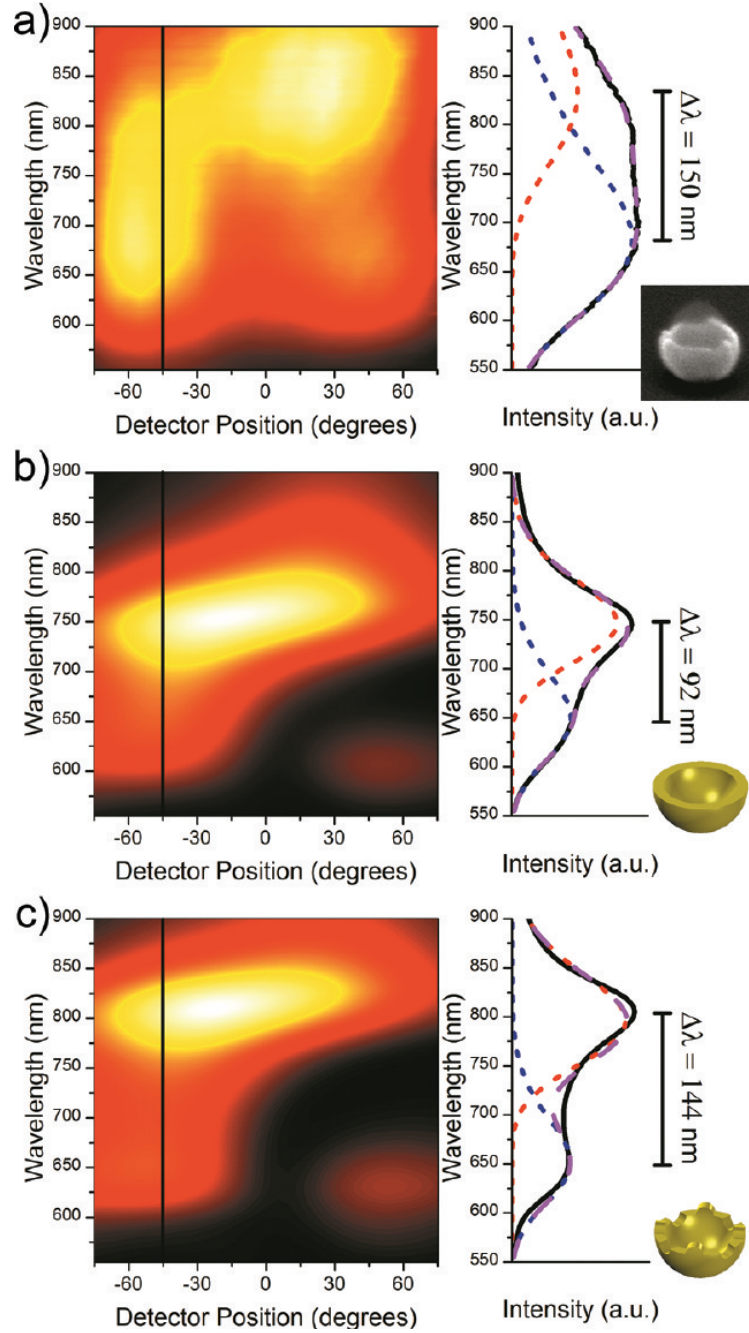


Figure 2.3 : Effect of nanocup geometry on plasmon mode energies. (a) Left: experimental scattering profile (color) of a nanocup on a glass substrate plotted as a function of detector position (x-axis) and wavelength (y-axis). Incident light was P-polarized and illuminated the sample from  $+45^\circ$ . Right: plot of the scattered spectrum at  $-45^\circ$  showing Gaussian peaks for the axial (blue) and transverse (red) modes. (b) Simulated smooth rim nanocup shows the same qualitative scattering features but reduced mode separation. (c) By adding an oscillatory rim to the simulated nanocup, the separation of the two nanocup modes increases by approximately 50 nm, similar to the experimentally measured mode separation.

of the transverse modes, red-shifting them by approximately 50 nm, closer to the experimentally observed values. Because the charges at the circular rim would still remain evenly distributed with this new geometry, the axial mode does not shift appreciably due to this rim structure. The net effect of the change in geometry is an increase in the relative separation of the axial and transverse modes. The change in rim geometry does not reorient the dipole moment of either plasmon mode, so the angular dependence of the scattering profile remains unaffected. Other minor deviations between theory and experiment are due to the ensemble-based measurement of the nanoparticles, which includes a random distribution of nanocups with these slight irregularities in the rim.

### 2.3.3 Effects of Substrate Permittivity

To further investigate the optical properties of a nanocup under the influence of a dielectric substrate, combined spectral and angular scattering measurements were performed for etched nanocups on a silicon substrate. Figure 2.4 presents the idealized case of nanocups deposited directly on a pristine, non-oxidized silicon substrate ( $\epsilon_{\text{silicon}} = 11.69$ ) and illuminated with P-polarized light (Figure 2.4a). Simulations predict an overall drop in scattering intensity (Figure 2.4b) relative to lower permittivity substrates, which is consistent with recent investigations of enhanced collection efficiency due to the deposition of plasmonic nanostructures on the input face of photodetectors and photovoltaic devices. [5, 32] The angular dependence of scattering

(Figure 2.4c) is expected to be completely dominated by backscattering at the incident angle of illumination ( $+45^\circ$ ), mimicking the localized scattering behavior of P-polarized light on a spherically symmetric nanoshell. This profile is a consequence of strong coupling of the plasmon modes of a nanoparticle with the high permittivity substrate through interaction with its image charge.[17]

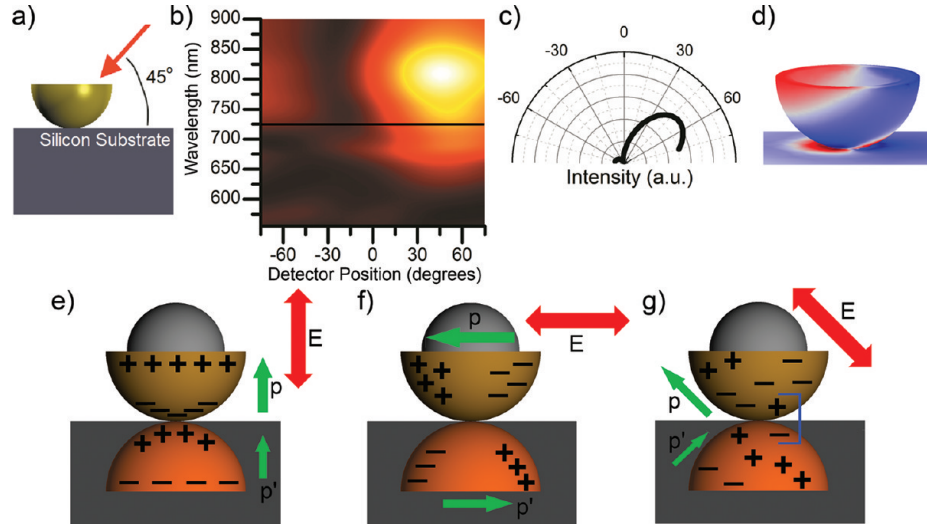


Figure 2.4 : Effects of a pristine silicon substrate on the plasmon spectrum and angular light scattering of a nanocup. (a) Schematic of nanocup/substrate simulation space with P-polarized light illuminating the sample from  $+45^\circ$ . (b) Scattering profile (color intensity) of a nanocup on a silicon substrate plotted as a function of detector position (x-axis) and wavelength (y-axis). (c) In polar coordinates (degrees), the angular distribution of 725 nm scattered light is strongly localized in the direction of backscattering, dictated by orientation of the charge distribution (d) on the nanocup. (e) Qualitative orientation of surface charge on the nanocup and the image charge within the substrate for purely axial [left], purely transverse [center], and the experimental [right] polarization of incident light. The green arrows depict the orientation of the effective dipole moment of the nanocup,  $p$ , and the image charge distribution,  $p'$ .

In the image charge model, the magnitude of the image charge is modified by a factor proportional to  $(\epsilon - 1)/(\epsilon + 1)$ , which approaches unity for high-dielectric

materials, such as silicon. Interaction with this image charge is more prominent with the axial plasmon mode (Figure 2.4e, left) due to the charge distribution along the axis of symmetry, specifically, the proximity of the charges at the bottom of the nanocup and the image charge projected on the surface of the substrate. The image dipole is aligned with the nanoparticle dipole, resulting in a larger net dipole and increased coupling with the incident radiation. The transverse mode (Figure 2.4e, center) is weakly affected since charges localized on the rim of the nanocup are well separated from their image charges on the substrate. In this case, the image and nanoparticle dipoles are oppositely oriented, weakening the net dipole moment of the system. Thus, in the presence of highdielectric substrates, the energy of the axial plasmon mode is red-shifted toward the energy of the transverse plasmon mode, and the separation of the resonant wavelengths of each respective mode is greatly reduced (Figure 2.4b).

In the case of  $45^\circ$  incidence and P-polarized light, the combination of both of these complex interactions explains the predicted scattering profile for 725 nm light (Figure 2.4c) and can also give rise to higher order ( $n > 1$ ) plasmon modes. The charge distribution on the nanocup (Figure 2.4d) indicates that the principle nanocup modes, now with similar plasmon energies, have hybridized to form a net dipole oriented along the polarization of the incident laser. The image dipole of the nanocup produces an inhomogeneous electric field in the near-field region of the nanocup, allowing hybridization with higher order plasmon modes, demonstrated by the appearance of

a faint linear quadrupole with an axis of symmetry aligned with the polarization of incident light. As a result, the charge distribution has a net dipole moment oriented along the polarization of the incident electric field. The radiation from this dipole explains the strong localized scattering observed in the direction of incidence ( $+45^\circ$ ). While the resonant wavelength for this mode is located around 825 nm, the scattering profile at 725 nm exhibits the same features and permits comparison of this idealized system with the more advanced model described below.

When a nanoscale dielectric layer is incorporated into the basic model (Figure 2.5a), we observe marked differences in the angular scattering spectra of the nanoparticle which provides useful insight into the properties of our experimental system. The addition of this dielectric more accurately reflects our experimental system (Figure 7b) which includes both a nanoscale native oxide layer and a nanoscale polymer layer to facilitate adhesion of the nanoparticles to the substrate. The simulation space was altered by including a 2 nm layer with an effective dielectric constant of  $\epsilon_{film} = 2.50$  between the nanocup and underlying substrate. Compared to the case of pristine silicon, the presence of a low-dielectric layer slightly blue shifts the axial plasmon mode away from the transverse modes and back toward the original resonance at 675 nm on glass. The angular dependence, however, indicates an entirely new scattering pattern compared to that of pristine silicon (Figure 6c). The presence of this low-dielectric barrier between the nanocup and the silicon creates two interfaces, deviating from the simple image charge model. Despite the extremely small thickness of the



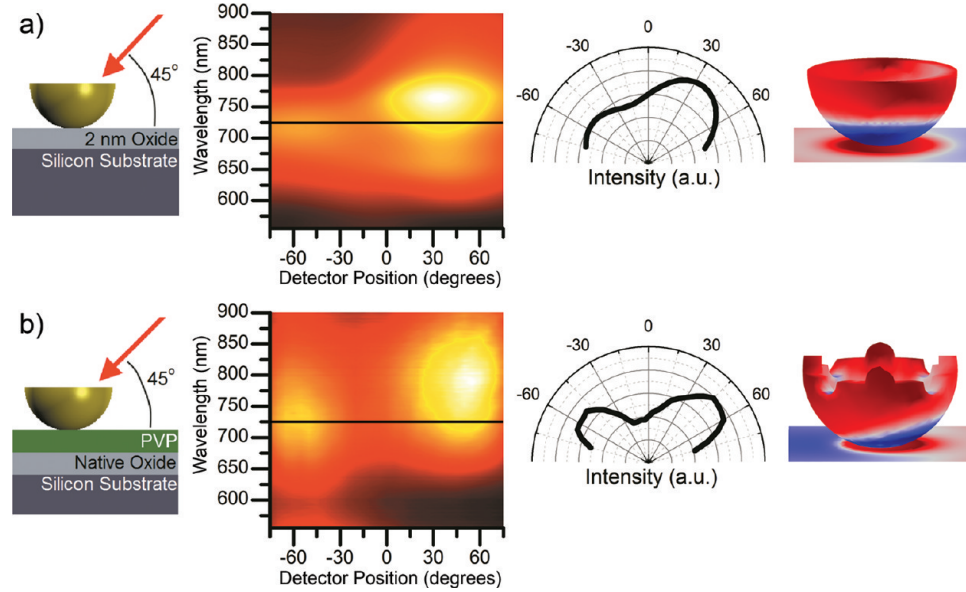


Figure 2.5 : Energy of the plasmon resonances in a symmetric silver heptamer Effects of a realistic silicon substrate on the plasmon spectrum and angular light scattering of a nanocup. In each panel is displayed (left to right): schematic of nanocup illumination and geometry of silicon substrate; scattering profile (color intensity) of a nanocup on a silicon substrate plotted as a function of detector position (x-axis) and wavelength (y-axis); angular distribution of 725 nm scattered light in polar coordinates (degrees); and charge distribution of the nanocup. In all cases, incident light is P-polarized and illuminates the sample from  $+45^\circ$ . (a) Simulation: the addition of a 2 nm thick lowdielectric layer ( $\epsilon_{film} = 2.50$ ) atop the silicon substrate blue shifts the plasmon modes. A forward-scattering peak in the direction of specular reflection ( $-45^\circ$ ) begins to emerge in the angular scattering distribution. The charge distribution on the nanocup is now dominated by the axial mode. (b) Experiment: The native oxide/PVP layer on the silicon surface results in a blue-shifting of the plasmon modes and the emergence of both a forward and backward scattering lobe, consistent with simulations in (a). The (theoretical) charge distribution of a nanocup with an oscillatory rim retains its primarily axial mode character.

lowdielectric film, the effect on the scattering profile is significant in our experimental characterization of this system. While the strongest scattering remains primarily in the direction of incidence ( $+45^\circ$ ), there is now, in addition, a significant amplitude of forward scattering in the direction of specular reflection ( $-45^\circ$ ). This is facilitated by the original nanocup axial mode which completely dominates the transverse and quadrupolar contributions. This study shows that small, highly localized changes in the dielectric of an underlying substrate may have large effects on the light-scattering properties of nanocups, a property that may provide a useful route to active control of light-scattering properties.

## 2.4 Finite Element Method (FEM) Modeling.

All simulations were performed using the COMSOL 4.2 RF module (commercial FEM software). A spherical simulation space was surrounded with a perfectly matched layer (PML) to absorb scattered light and then a scattering boundary condition to prevent reflections. The space, including the PML regions, was divided by a plane to simulate the dielectric interface of the supporting substrate. The dielectric constant,  $\epsilon_{\text{substrate}}$ , for the bottom hemisphere was chosen to reflect the appropriate substrate used in the experiment ( $\epsilon_{\text{glass}} = 2.50$ ,  $\epsilon_{\text{silicon}} = 12.69$ ), while the upper hemisphere was modeled as air,  $\epsilon_{\text{air}} = 1$ . An effective oxide layer was modeled as a second interface with a constant thickness and with a dielectric constant of  $\epsilon_{\text{oxide}} = 2.50$ . The incident radiation was defined as a simple monochromatic plane wave incident

at  $45^\circ$  that satisfied the Fresnel equations at the dielectric interface. This approach counters the major reflections between the interface and PML layers. The simulation space does not implement periodic boundary conditions, which represent a perfect array as opposed to the randomly oriented particles in the experiment.

A nanoshell was modeled as two concentric spheres of radius  $[r_1, r_2] = [60, 78]$  nm at the center of the simulation space. The optical constants of the Au outer shell were described using experimental values [16] and the silica core as an isotropic dielectric with  $\epsilon_{core} = 2.04$ . To model a simple nanocup, the upper half of the Au shell was removed, leaving a Au semishell with a smooth rim. A model created to more accurately simulate the structure of the fabricated nanocup involved adding and removing semicircular (radius 15 nm) patches of gold with the same thickness as the original shell to and from the smooth rim (Figure 2.6). This wavering edge is a representative geometry of the inhomogeneous rim that results from the plasma etching process. At the bottom of each particle, a 3 nm facet was created to properly model the curvature of the nanoparticle coming into contact with the flat substrate surface. For a reasonable approximation of the far-field radiation patterns, a near-field to far-field transformation<sup>34</sup> was performed in postprocessing by performing on a well-defined surface around the nanoparticle. Because of the supporting substrate, the transformation surface is hemisphere exclusively above the interface. For each detector position and simulated wavelength, the far-field intensity was integrated inside the angular region of this transform surface that corresponded to the collection

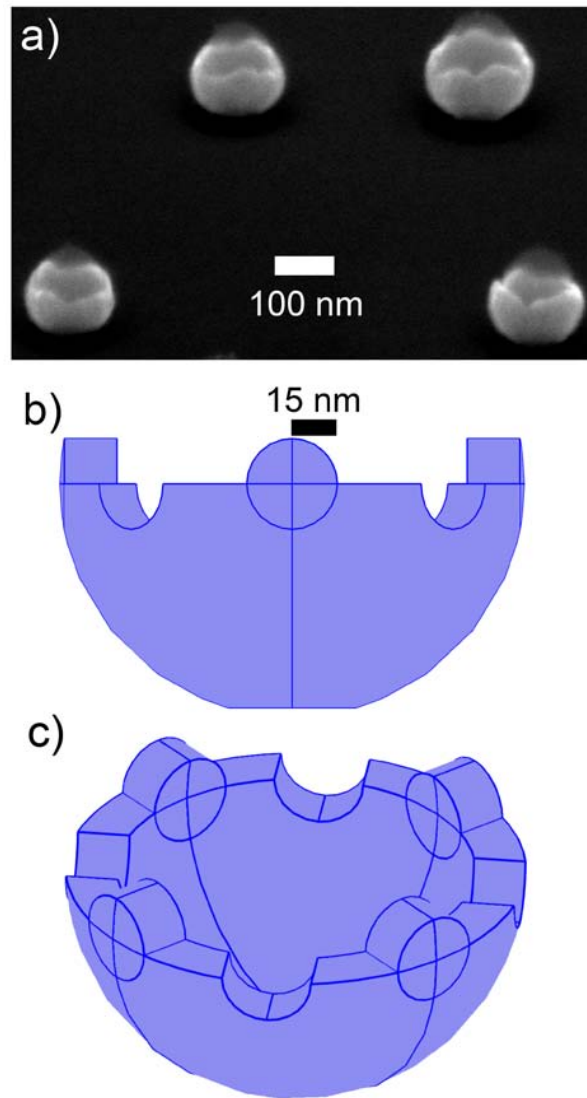


Figure 2.6 : Detailed geometry of wavering rim on experimental and simulated nanocups. (a) SEM micrographs of nanocups taken at an oblique angle of  $70^\circ$  reveal the rim morphology of the entire nanocup. (b) The geometry of the simulated nanocup mimics the inhomogeneous nature of the nanocup sample with a series of semi-circular (15 nm radius) bumps and depressions in the rim of half a nanoshell. (c) The two features are alternately positioned around the circumference of the rim in even increments to approximate the random variations of individual nanocups in the ensemble measurements.

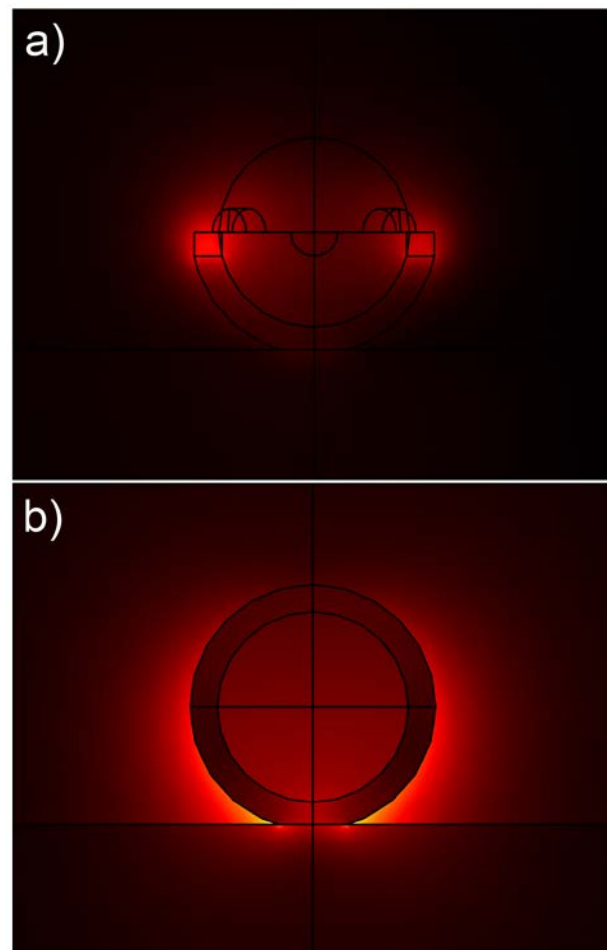


Figure 2.7 : Simulated scattered electric field magnitude around a nanocup and nanoshell. (a) The nanocup geometry allows for a higher degree of localization of the scattered electric field. The field intensity is reduced compared to a (b) nanoshell.

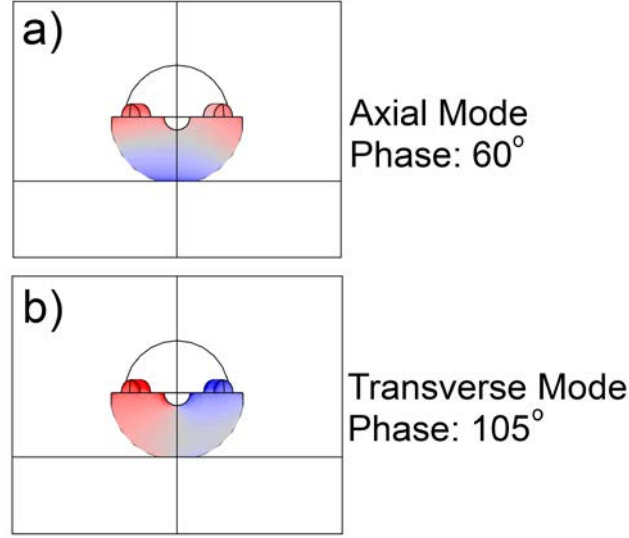


Figure 2.8 : Charge distribution on nanocup excited at 700 nm. In the region of spectral overlap, both the axial and transverse modes are excited by the same wavelength at different phases. The relative phase offset between (a) the nanocup axial mode and (b) the transverse mode is  $45^\circ$  and does not facilitate destructive interference.

cone of the optical assembly. Electric field plots (Figure 2.7) easily identify the localized field enhancements and plasmonic hot-spots. Charge plots were generated by applying Gauss's Theorem at the surface of the particle. The difference between the orthogonal component of the electric field immediately above and below the metal surface within an infinitely small pillbox was calculated to obtain the surface charge density. The phase of the incident wave was adjusted to find the maximum amplitude of the resonant charge oscillations of the plasmon modes (Figure 2.8).

## 2.5 Summaries and conclusions

In this chapter, we have examined the spectral- and angle-dependent light-scattering properties of plasmonic nanocups, through experimental studies and numerical simu-

lations. The transverse and axial plasmon modes of a nanocup scatter light in distinct angular patterns that are sensitive to the presence of a dielectric substrate and its local permittivity adjacent to the nanoparticle. On low-dielectric substrates, both the axial and transverse nanocup modes scatter light in directions determined by nanocup orientation. With a high degree of sensitivity, the permittivity of the underlying substrate affects not only the wavelength of the resonances but also the angular light scattering of the system in significant ways. The different angular scattering and wavelength response from the axial and transverse nanocup modes make the nanocup an interesting particle for the nanoscale manipulation of light in three dimensions. The sensitivity of this system to geometric and environmental factors may present opportunities for active, substrate-mediated control of light scattering.

# Chapter 3

## Fabrication of Nanocups

### 3.1 Introduction

It is always very important to understand the experimental details, for example, the fabrication of the nanostructures as well, while we are trying to study the system. Here as a supplemental information, we go through the experimental setup and the fabrication process of the nanocups.

### 3.2 Sample Fabrication

A submonolayer of nanocups was produced by first synthesizing  $[r_1, r_2] = [60, 78]$  nm  $SiO_2/Au$  coreshell nanoshells by previously reported methods, [4, 25] where the dimensions of the core and total nanoparticle radius were directly obtained from scanning electron microscopy (SEM) measurements. The nanoparticles were then deposited sparsely on dielectric substrates to minimize any contributions to the observed optical properties from coupled, adjacent nanoparticles. Glass and silicon substrates cleaned with a “piranha” solution (30%  $H_2O_2$ , 70%  $H_2SO_4$ ) were first functionalized with a nanoscale poly(4-vinylpyridine) (PVP) layer to promote nanoparticle adhesion.[22] The substrates were then submerged in a dilute solution of synthesized nanoshells for 4 h to produce a submonolayer of nanoparticles with an average sur-



face density of approximately 2 particles/ $\mu\text{m}^2$  (4% surface coverage). Compared to a close-packed geometry ( $\sim 53\mu\text{m}^2$  or 74% surface coverage), this density was experimentally verified to eliminate any detectable interparticle coupling effects in the scattering measurements. The nanoshells were reshaped into nanocups by removing the top portion of the gold shell via plasma etching in a commercial reactive ion etch (RIE) unit (TRION Minilock- Phantom III RIE). High-power argon ion bombardment physically ablated a specific portion of the Au shell from the upper surface of the nanoshells, leaving Au semishells with exposed silica cores oriented in the direction of the surface normal (Figure 3.1a) .[24] A scanning electron microscope (FEI Quanta 400 SEM) was used to measure the particle density of nanoshells on the surface, as well as to verify the degree of etching of the individual nanostructures (Figure 3.1b). Images obtained at an oblique angle ( $70^\circ$ ) show that hemispherical nanoparticles are formed in this manner, where the rim of each nanocup contains small random height fluctuations (Figure 3.1c).

Extinction measurements (Varian CARY 5000 UV visNIR spectrophotometer) of nanocups and nanoshells allow us to directly compare the plasmonic properties of the etched nanocups with the spherically symmetric nanoshells from which they were obtained. A custom-built detection system was used to measure the scattering profile of nanoparticles as a function of polarization, scattering angle, and wavelength (Figure 3.2). Light from a commercial supercontinuum laser source (Fianium SC400) was passed through a spatial filter and Glan- Taylor polarizer before being focused

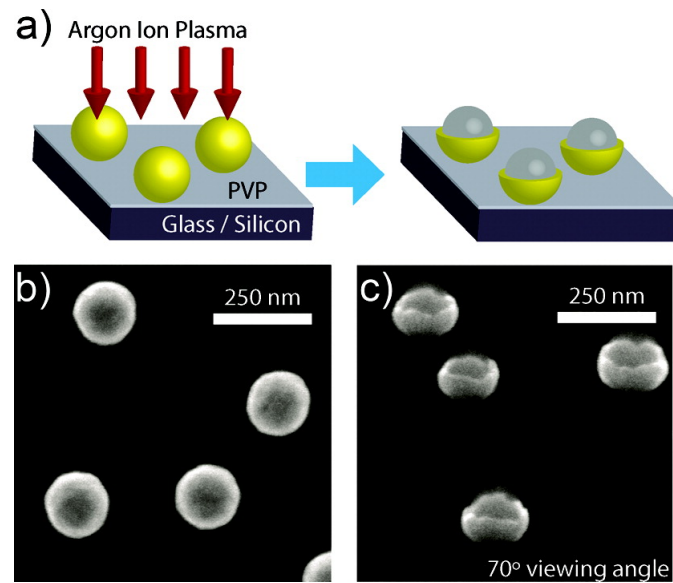


Figure 3.1 : Fabrication of nanoparticle samples. (a) Pristine substrate (either glass or silicon) was functionalized with PVP and submerged in an aqueous solution of goldsilica nanoshells to immobilize the particles on the surface. To fabricate nanocups, the sample was then exposed to a high power argon plasma etch. The top half of the gold shell was ablated, leaving a nanocup oriented in the direction of the surface normal. SEM micrographs of (b) nanoshells before and (c) oriented nanocups after the etching process.

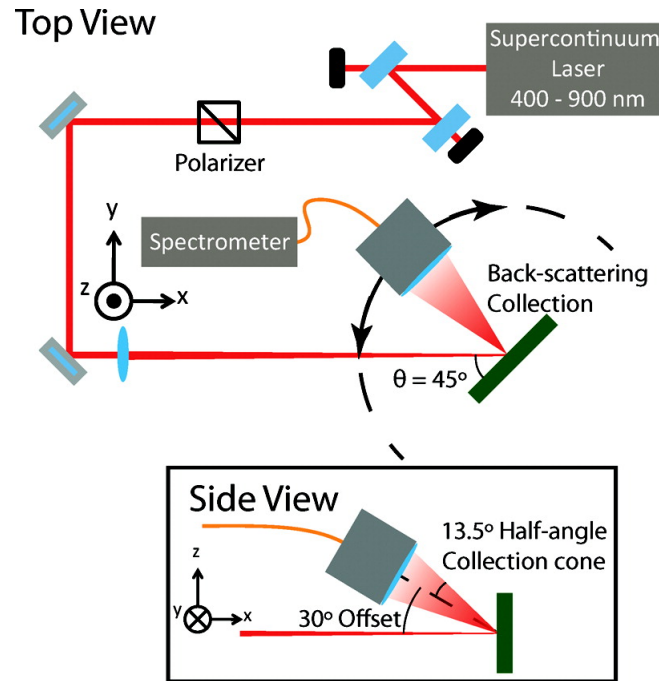


Figure 3.2 : Schematic of the backscattering detection system. An attenuated commercial supercontinuum laser (400-900 nm) was polarized and focused onto a sample ( $\theta = 45^\circ$ ). A rotational stage equipped with a collection lens and fiber coupler rotates around the sample to measure the far-field radiation. Side view: Scattered light was collected from  $30^\circ$  above the plane of the table to prevent the collection optics from obstructing the incident beam or becoming saturated by specular reflection. The collected light is fiber-coupled into a spectrometer for analysis from 550 to 900 nm.

onto the sample. The samples were mounted vertically in the center of a rotating stage such that the laser was incident upon the sample at  $45 \pm 2^\circ$  with respect to the surface normal. A collection assembly consisting of an achromatic lens and commercial fiber collimation package was mounted on the rotating stage. This experimental configuration gathers scattered light in a  $13.5^\circ$  halfangle collection cone, rotated in  $5^\circ$  increments around the normal vector of the sample surface. In order to achieve a large collection range ( $75^\circ$  on either side of the normal vector), the collection assembly was oriented  $30^\circ$  above the incident beam to avoid obstructing the beam and collecting light from specular reflection at the interface (Figure 3.2, inset). Backscattered light from the sample was coupled into a multimode fiber and passed to a commercial spectrometer (Ocean Optics USB4000-VIS-NIR) for analysis.

### 3.3 Summaries and conclusions

In this chapter, as supplemental information, we include the fabrication method for nanocups, and the spectra detection system used in the experiment. All of these details help us better understand the scattering geometry and properties of nanocups.

## Chapter 4

### Conclusion

In the thesis, with the help of FEM based commercial softwares COMSOL, we investigated scattering profile of the well-known light bending nanoparticles, nanocups. Other than the light redirection profile, we also found geometry and environment sensitive scattering pattern from the nanocups.

We have shown that the properties of plasmonic Au nanocups possess magnetoinductive modes that redirect scattered light in a direction dependent on particle orientation, an effect that also controls the interparticle coupling of plasmons in adjacent nanocups. Our optical extinction measurements confirm that the fabricated particles exhibit these predicted modes.

Besides, we have examined the spectral- and angle-dependent light-scattering properties of plasmonic nanocups, through experimental studies and numerical simulations. The transverse and axial plasmon modes of a nanocup scatter light in distinct angular patterns that are sensitive to the presence of a dielectric substrate and its local permittivity adjacent to the nanoparticle. On low-dielectric substrates, both the axial and transverse nanocup modes scatter light in directions determined by nanocup orientation. With a high degree of sensitivity, the permittivity of the underlying substrate affects not only the wavelength of the resonances but also the angular light scattering of the system in significant ways. The different angular scattering and

wavelength response from the axial and transverse nanocup modes make the nanocup an interesting particle for the nanoscale manipulation of light in three dimensions. The sensitivity of this system to geometric and environmental factors may present opportunities for active, substrate-mediated control of light scattering.

Last, we also reviewed the fabrication process and experimental setup as a supplemental information. It will help us better understand the geometry dependency introduced by different fabrication methods of nanocups.

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